

California Conservation Corps

San Diego Center

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CCC removed burned trees, cleared creeks, rebuilt trails, and more....

CALIF. CONSERVATION CORPS MARKS ONE YEAR OF FIRE RECOVERY WORK

Nearly one year and 175,000 work hours later, members of the California Conservation Corps today are sandbagging and shoring up areas burned by last October's San Diego County fires to protect them from winter rains.

CCC State Director Will Semmes said the Corps is proud to have a role in the recovery efforts.

"The CCC's mission includes both responding to natural disasters as well as protecting California's natural resources on an ongoing basis," Semmes said. "Corpsmembers were initially dispatched to the fires, but stayed on to devote many hours to the recovery work. They really gave it their all and we're pleased with what they've accomplished."

The current work follows an effort which began October 26, 2003, when CCC crews from as far away as Sacramento responded to the Cedar and Paradise fires. Within two weeks, the Corps began an intensive fire rehabilitation and restoration effort on the burned lands; the CCC's fire recovery work has continued throughout the year. Corpsmembers have removed burned trees and vegetation, cleared creeks and channels, cleaned out culverts, rebuilt trails and helped to stabilize hillsides with erosion control measures. To divert water runoff, they have also stacked gravel bags and sandbags -- more than a quarter-million to date.

CCC crews have worked for the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, San Diego Gas & Electric and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.

Renée Bahl, director of the County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, said the CCC was a tremendous addition to the parks and recreation team.

"The corpsmembers seamlessly merged with our field staff and together successfully accomplished the daunting task of restoring more than 15,000 acres, rebuilding more than 40 miles of trails, and reopening all but four of our fire-damaged county parks."

The CCC also received National Emergency Grant funding from the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to hire long-term unemployed workers and those displaced by the fires. Through the San Diego Workforce Partnership, 178 area residents were hired for six months.

Sherry Santi, one of the WIA corpsmembers, lost her trailer and all her belongings in the Cedar Fire. She and boyfriend Dennis Franklin helped with the CCC's fire recovery efforts at Dos Picos County Park in Ramona, just down the road from where they had lived.

"It was like a healing process for us," she said. "We had lost our home, our jobs and had nothing to smile about. The work made us feel good and we could start rebuilding our lives."

The California Conservation Corps, a department in the state Resources Agency, hires young men and women between the ages of 18 and 23 for a year of outdoor work and emergency response. Locally, the CCC's San Diego Center, serving San Diego and Imperial counties, employs 82 corpsmembers and is located in National City.

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Media Alert: *Please contact us for a first-hand look at what the CCC crews are doing.*